



P.O. Box 787 (Mile 4.4 Talkeetna Spur Road) Talkeetna, AK 99676 (Ph) (907) 733-2273 (Fax) (907) 733-1735 [schc@sunshinedclinic.org](mailto:schc@sunshinedclinic.org)

April 21, 2007  
Letter of Appeal  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Room TW-A325  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket Nos. 96-45 and 97-21. Sunshine Community Health Center, HCP # 12251, is appealing the funding commitment letter issued October 19, 2006, for FRN #0001755635, Packet ID # 66829 and the denial of our appeal to USAC.

To Federal Communications Commission Appeal Board:

Sunshine Community Health Center requested support for a T-1 link between Talkeetna and Seattle, Washington to access vital child and adolescent psychiatric services for our rural community. In Alaska, the prevalence of mental illness, substance abuse, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder far exceeds national norms, which we have also found true in our community. Perhaps the most disturbing epidemiological feature in the state of Alaska is the high rate of suicide in rural and 'frontier' communities. The suicide rate for rural Alaskan children is 9 times the national average. Furthermore, variables such as weather, lack of road systems and itinerant medical coverage complicate service delivery in our community.

Sunshine Community Health Center established a partnership with the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Alaska's only public psychiatric hospital, to provide much needed psychiatric services to our underserved, rural area. The mission of the Alaska Psychiatric Institute's Telebehavioral Health Initiative is "to create, promote, and maintain access to behavioral health services through advanced technology in rural and frontier Alaska." The child and adolescent psychiatric services of the Alaska Psychiatric Institute's telepsychiatry program are based in Seattle. As a result, Sunshine Community Health Center required a T-1 link to Seattle to provide child and adolescent services to our most vulnerable and needy population.

Sunshine Community Health Center understood that, although the distance between Talkeetna and Seattle was over the maximum allowed distance (MAD), in the past health clinics have been funded for circuits originating in Alaska and terminating either in Seattle, Washington or Portland, Oregon, because AT&T has a Point of Presence in these locations. Unfortunately, in our case funding was not granted to Seattle. The commitment letter providing access only to Anchorage was received on October 24,

2006. Sunshine Community Health Center was made aware of the reduced funding on November 8, 2006. An appeal letter was sent December 14, 2006 and supplemental letters were forwarded on January 8, 2007 and February 26, 2007. Our final appeal was denied by USAC on April 18, 2007.

Due to lack of access to care in our unique clinical setting we request that the T-1 link between Talkeetna and Seattle be granted to provide much needed child and adolescent services. We appreciate your consideration in this matter and will supply further documentation to the appeal board if needed.

Sincerely,

Mary Loeb, M.D.  
Interim Executive Director  
Sunshine Community Health Center